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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 001059

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [KCOR](#) [PINR](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL UP AND RUNNING

REF: A. JAKARTA 271 (TRUSTED AIDE PAINTS GRIM PICTURE)  
[1](#)B. 06 JAKARTA 13450 (PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL)  
[1](#)C. 06 JAKARTA 13173 (PRESIDENT AND VP SHOWDOWN)  
[1](#)D. 06 JAKARTA 13233 (BALL IN SBY'S COURT)

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Classified By: Political Officer Eric W. Kneedler, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) On April 11 President Yudhoyono formally swore in the nine members of the new Presidential Advisory Council, created in accordance with last year's Presidential Advisory Council Bill (Ref A). The Council consists of luminaries from the legal, political, military, academic and educational fields, and formalized the roles of four advisors already in the President's orbit. Politicians from across the party spectrum endorsed the announcement and most analysts viewed the caliber of the members of the Advisory Council as a solid indication that the President would have no choice but to tap the Council's collective expertise. The advisors were expected to complement rather than usurp the Cabinet Ministers' functions and provide strategic advice to the President. Agun Gunandjar Sudarsa, a Golkar legislator and the chairman of the special legislative committee that drafted the law, told us he was very satisfied with the composition of the Council and said he believed the President would use the Council in the spirit his legislation intended. Presidential spokesperson Andi Mallarangeng announced that the formation of the new ;QeboGUSHED GROUP  
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[1](#)2. (C) The following nine individuals were announced as members of the Advisory Council:

- Ali Alatas: International Affairs Advisor  
Alatas' appointment formalized his pre-existing role as a Presidential advisor on international affairs issues, as well as Indonesia's Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process. Alatas served as Foreign Minister during the Suharto regime, as well as under former President Habibie. An Indonesian of Arab descent, Alatas is perhaps the most well regarded foreign affairs expert in the country and brings more than 40 years of experience to the job. Among his many accomplishments, Alatas is best known for his role in normalizing relations with China in 1990, as well as for his oversight of Indonesia's 1992-1995 Non-Aligned Movement

(NAM) chairmanship. Alatas was born in Jakarta on November 4, 1932.

- Dr. Syahir: Advisor for Economic Affairs

A Harvard educated economist and chairman of Partai Perhimpunan Indonesai Baru (The New Indonesian Association Party), Syahir already served as an advisor to President Yudhoyono on economic issues. Syahrir was a student activist and was jailed for his participation in the Malari riots during the Suharto era. He was born in Kudus, Central Java on February 24, 1945. He is currently in Washington and will be in the United States until April 19.

- Rachmawati Soekarnoputri: Advisor for Political Affairs

Rachmawati is former President Sukarno's daughter, former President Megawati's younger sister, and the founder of the Pioneer party. Rachmawati already served as a political advisor to President Yudhoyono prior to her appointment to the Advisory Council and by most accounts, brings very little to the table beyond her last name. She was born in Jakarta on September 27, 1950.

- Dr. T.B. Silalahi: Defense and Security Affairs Advisor

T.B. has served as a Special Advisor to the President and a jack of all trades since the President assumed office in 2004. His new title does not appear to change his role in any appreciable way. Silalahi was a career military officer and served as the Minister for Administrative Reform in 1993 under Suharto. T.B. is Christian and has kept a very low public profile. His cousin Sudi Silalahi is the Cabinet

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Secretary. He was born in Siantar, North Sumatra on April

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17, 1938.

- Dr. Emil Salim: Environmental Advisor

Emil is a Professor of Economics at the University of Indonesia and has informally advised the President on economic and environmental affairs issues in the past. A member of the "Berkeley Mafia" during the New Order, Emil also served as the Minister for Environmental Affairs under Suharto. He is co-chair of the USINDO Board of Trustees. He was born in Lahat, South Sumatra on June 8, 1930

- K.H. Ma'ruf Amin: Religious Affairs Advisor

Ma'ruf is the chairman of Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) for edict affairs.

- Dr. Subur Budi Santoso: Social and Cultural Affairs Advisor

Subur is the former general chairman of the Democratic Party, President Yudhoyono's party. He is a lecturer at the Bogor Institute of Agriculture.

- Dr. Adnan Buyung Nasution: Legal Affairs Advisor

Adnan is a well respected human rights advocate and the founder of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI). Adnan was imprisoned for his human rights advocacy under both Sukarno and Suharto. Adnan chaired the legal defense for Amir Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, although he says privately he headed this team only because he was asked to do so and felt obligated as a human rights lawyer to counter the weak evidence; he said he does not believe in Bashir nor the violence he advocates. Adnan obtained a law degree from Utrecht University in the Netherlands and also has degrees from the University of Indonesia and from Australia. He was born in Jakarta on July 20, 1934.

- Prof Dr. Ir. Radi A. Gani: Agricultural Affairs Advisor

Radi is a professor of agriculture and the former rector of Hasanuddin State University in Makassar. She was a Golkar candidate for the Vice Governorship of South Sulawesi.

PRAISE FOR THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

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13. (C) Media coverage of the new Advisory Council has been largely complimentary, and the star power and credibility of the members effectively blunted potential criticism from opponents of the Yudhoyono administration. The contrast between this announcement and the President's clumsy unveiling of the controversial and politically charged Reform Unit, or UKP3R (Ref D), could not be any more marked. Few have questioned the motives of the members of the new Council, and at least one, Adnan Nasution, has spoken out publicly about his initial reluctance to join what he characterized as "a sinking ship," lending to an overall impression that the Council members would not simply serve as "yes men." Golkar legislator Agun Gunandjar Sudarsa, the architect of the legislation mandating the Advisory Council, told us that he was pleased with the makeup of the group and was convinced that the President had made an earnest effort to comply with the basic spirit of the law. He believed the President would have no choice but to listen to their advice as the members would undoubtedly leave if they felt their input was not being taken seriously.

#### WHAT WILL THE COUNCIL DO?

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14. (C) In his public speech on the occasion of the Council's inauguration, President Yudhoyono announced that the members would "advise me on issues deemed fundamental to state policy-making." T.B. Silalahi said publicly that the Council would "offer strategic advice directly to the President." T.B. added that "we are not going to go into detail on routine matters, since Ministers already do that." According to the Presidential Advisory Council Law, the President had complete authority to shape the direction and influence of the council to fit his needs. The Council would respond to requests for input on specific issues and would also be expected to research and analyze other issues without the President's prompting. Beyond those very basic parameters, however, the Council's level of access and power would be entirely up to the President.

15. (C) T.B. Silalahi's advisor, Lia Suntoso, told us that

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despite the new title, T.B. did not expect his role vis a vis the President to change. According to Lia, T.B. believed he would continue to respond to all manner of requests from the President, many of which would be very far afield from his official Defense and Security Advisor role. When we noted that T.B. had previously suggested the President would do little more than go through the motions and appoint lightweights to the Council in order to conform to the law, Lia noted that the President had undergone a change of heart and ultimately opted to make the best of the legislative requirement. T.B., she said, would do everything he could to try and make the Council an effective vehicle for Presidential advice. She noted, however, that T.B. perceived the President's inability to act on advice and make the hard decisions to be SBY's primary liability as President, not a paucity of sound counsel or capable advisors.

16. (C) The nine members of the Council officially started their duties on April 12 and its leadership will adjust on a rotating basis. Their offices are located in the Supreme Advisory Council building, a complex adjacent to the Palace which housed a similar institution during the Suharto era.

#### THE INVISIBLE REFORM UNIT

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17. (C) The unveiling of the Advisory Council re-focused unwanted attention on the President's ill fated effort to create a Presidential Unit for the Management of Reform Programs (UKP3KR) last year. Though the President had convened two meetings of the UKP3R, it reportedly still had no mandate, no funds, and nothing resembling a commitment

from the President. Most of our contacts declared the UKP3KR dead a long time ago and the administration had succeeded in quietly sidelining it until the announcement of the Advisory Council invited renewed scrutiny.

18. (C) Presidential spokesperson Andi Mallarangeng addressed the UKP3KR issue in a recent press conference by saying that it would continue with its functions and would not be affected by the creation of the Advisory Council. According to Andi, while the Advisory Council would be responsible for providing the President with advice, the UKP3KR would help the President carry out his reform agenda. The two outfits would have entirely different responsibilities and the UKP3KR would not be disbanded. Few of our contacts have bought this argument, however, and most interpreted its obvious failure as a set-back for pro-reform elements, as a well as a repudiation of the President's leadership.

COMMENT  
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19. (C) The success or failure of the new Advisory Council as an effective mechanism for advice will depend entirely on the President himself. The expertise and credentials of most of the members are beyond reproach and unlike many of the current Cabinet Ministers, members of the Advisory Council have no obvious political agenda or incentive to undermine the President. If it was simply a question of experience, know-how and good intentions, the Presidential Advisory Council would seemingly be well placed to play a useful role. The President needs a boost to transform his excessively cautious leadership style, and perhaps this group can help.  
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